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ABSTRACT

A unit designed to provide more exposure to geography in the foreign language classroom has as its objective to make geography more real to the students, and it assumes little fore-knowledge of the target country. The activities outlined are to be used for five to twenty minutes in daily classes over an extended period of time, about four weeks, to allow for assimilation of the information and for classroom practice. All of the materials are either teacher-made or available in the school library. Eleven activities are to be prepared before beginning the unit. These include a dittoed outline of the country and surrounding area with no names or labels; an overhead projection outline map; an overhead projection of the printed names of the map's countries and capitals; an outline of only the target country, with geographic symbols that are numbered only, and a list of feature names to be matched to the symbol numbers; a country outline map with state boundaries and capitals, for overhead projection; one or two picture slides of geographic features; an English-language filmstrip about the geography; a geographical jeopardy game; a jigsaw puzzle map; a review study sheet; and a geography exam. A master plan with 20 lesson suggestions and suggested timing accompanies these activities and materials. (MSE)

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Teaching Geography to First-Year Students: Lesson Plans Using More than Maps

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Most educators would agree that teaching the geography of the country where the foreign language is spoken is an integral part of teaching the language. Most textbooks, however, devote several hundred pages to grammar and only a few pages to geography. Grammar texts usually provide a springboard for geography study in the form of a reading passage, cultural notes, and maps but do not establish an approach for helping students to assimilate geographical information during their study of the language. This unit was designed to fill that void.

For many students today, geography is just as foreign as the language itself, something really abstract and "foreign." In order for the language and culture to have significance, it is crucial for students to acquire a feeling of concreteness about the existence of the country. German, for example, can't just be spoken "somewhere over there." The challenge then is to get beyond maps for a more memorable experience. After several years of being disappointed with what my students remembered about our treks into geography, I decided to start from ground zero, writing objectives and developing activities.

An Obstacle to Keep in Mind

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When is geography learning at its best? When one experiences it directly. As teachers, that is how most of us know about the geography of

any given country. We've been there! For us geography is exciting and real because we still feel the awe of seeing the Brandenburger Tor or Neuschwanstein or we can remember the diligent efforts at maps, buses, and missed trains that got us to those memorable places. Most students have little or no previous first-hand experience with geography, except the family vacation. For students, geography is often the opposite of what it is for the teacher—laborious and not at all real.

The objective of the following outline is to make geography become concrete and real, and therefore more memorable to students. These activities were developed for first-year high school students of German. The unit can be modified and repeated during the second year. The teacher assumes students have not visited the country and have not studied the geography of the target country and continent.

Activities are used in daily classes over an extended length of time to provide time for students to assimilate information and time for classroom practice. Students should not get the idea that geography is a separate unit which may be forgotten once it is completed just because it is not grammar. Plan to spend five to twenty minutes each day for four weeks. If possible start the geography unit during a less difficult grammar unit, aiming for completion well before the students' thoughts turn to Thanksgiving and December holidays and vacations.

Materials and Resources for the Unit

All of these materials are teacher-made and/or available in a school library. Prepare the following before beginning the unit:

ACTIVITY A: Ditto master of an outline map of the country and surrounding countries or bodies of water. Put no labels on the map. Number each country and all bodies of water that are to be learned.

ACTIVITY B: Overhead projection outline map of the same target country and surrounding countries and bodies of water.

ACTIVITY C: Overhead projection of the printed names of the countries and their capitals in the foreign language. Display in two columns.

ACTIVITY D: Ditto master of a 9 x 11-inch outline of only the target country. Use appropriate symbols to designate states or districts, cities, water, mountains, forests, national capitals as well as the capitals of the states or districts. Define these symbols in an area for the key. Number each symbol on the map outline. Use consecutive numbers and attempt to have not more than 30 geographical features for this first unit. Below the map, list in the foreign language the features to be located. For example: _____ Bonn _____ Elbe. For a homework activity students write in the number from the map which corresponds to the location.

ACTIVITY E: Overhead projection outline of only the target country, including state boundaries and the capital or important cities.

ACTIVITY F: One or two pictures or slides of each geographical item listed in Activity D. Decide which special feature of cities, capitals, and states are to be discussed. Prepare to show pictures of only these selected aspects and restrict your commentary to very brief but interesting details.

ACTIVITY G: Filmstrip in English about the geography. (The social studies department usually has materials of this nature.) Prepare an activity based on the filmstrip that emphasizes the aspects of your unit. My students listen and watch the filmstrip, jotting down only geographical names as they appear in the filmstrip. Spelling is not important as long as students understand what they have written. After the filmstrip, students receive a blank outline map of the country. They then place each geographical location from their list on the map, looking up any spelling necessary.

ACTIVITY H: Jeopardy game. Use geographical information in 4-5 categories for class review in team play style.

ACTIVITY I: Jigsaw puzzle (optional). Make your own from published maps by gluing them securely to corrugated cardboard. Let dry. With a sharp knife cut the maps

into 60-100 pieces. Jigsaw puzzles are also available from realia companies.

ACTIVITY J: Review study sheet. Include several exercises in the desired testing format.

ACTIVITY K: Geography exam.

Suggested Master Plan

Day	Minutes	
1	10	Hand out worksheet (Activity A) for homework due day 2. Show students the maps available to them as resources. Students are to list the numbers from the map on a separate sheet of paper, writing in the country and capital or body of water. Students are not to write on the worksheet at this time.
2	20	Collect lists of countries, capitals and grade for accuracy. In class use overhead (Activity B) to practice pronunciation. Teach key words like *neighbor, to the east, capital city,* etc. Ask simple questions in the foreign language. Announce which countries, capitals, etc. the students are responsible for spelling accurately, if any.
3	10	Repeat Activity B.
4	5	As class warm-up use geographical questions without the aid of maps or overheads.
5	15	Use Activity A. Students cut the countries apart, mix them up, and then write the name of the country and capital on each individual piece. Then students put their own jigsaw puzzles back together.
6	15	Activity C. Cover the country column on the overhead and ask for the capitals orally and vice versa. This is also an opportunity to teach the abbreviations of the countries and approach the alphabet.
7	20	Show filmstrip as introduction to the specific geographical features of the country.
8	10	Assign worksheet (Activity D) as homework for day 10. Be sure students have ready access to a well-drawn map.

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9	5	As a class warm-up ask five to ten questions in the foreign language about the capitals of various states, the location of cities, rivers, etc. Use a large wall map if possible.
10	10	Collect worksheet. Use overhead projection (Activity E) to practice pronunciation and reinforce location.
11	10	Give brief comments about the geographic size, climate, and population of the country. Students take notes.
12	30	Show appropriate slides or pictures about specific cities, rivers, states, from Activity D.
13	30	Show filmstrip again and carry out the activity you prepared.
14	10	Ask questions to review previous days' material.
15	30	Finish discussion from day 12.
16	5	Assign study sheet due day 18 (Activity J).
17	30	Play Jeopardy for review.
18	15	Check study sheet in class.
19	15	Jigsaw activity with target country (Activity I or see day 5 above).
20	45	Geography Exam.

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